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John F. Gouche
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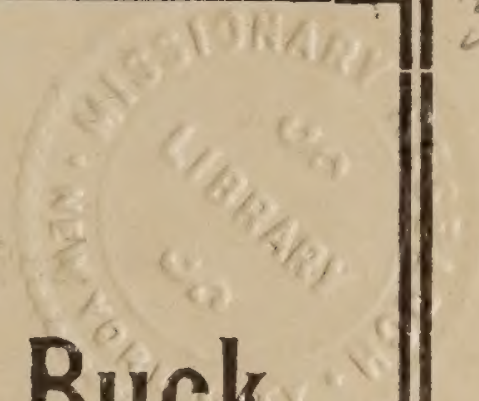

Lois Mathild Buck

BY

J. H. Messmore.

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Belief in a Divine Providence is sometimes rudely shaken when we meet some men and some women who have been permitted to come to India as Christian missionaries And, on the other hand, it is even more difficult to understand why some who were here have not been allowed to remain longer. The necrology of the North India Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the last decade is simply a list of names of men and women who, humanly speaking, "could not be spared." The Rev. J T. McMahon, Dr. P. T. Wilson, Phœbe Rowe, Bishop Parker, Isabella Thoburn and the Rev. D. L. Thoburn have been removed by death since June 1896; and I do not think it possible to name six from among us who survive whose removal would be such a loss to the mission, as was sustained when these six persons were called to their reward. And now the name which appears at the head of

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this paper is to be added to the list. This name is entitled to a place among these honored ones, not on account of what Miss Buck accomplished, for she was but a young woman and had scarcely commenced her missionary work; but the singular purity and spirituality of her character, her intelligent, loving sympathy for the people of India, her delight in mission work, her absolute self-devotion to the establishment of Christ's Kingdom in India, along with her very superior intellectual and literary equipment justified the expectation that she would be a very valuable and successful missionary. She was born in India of missionary parents and was named after the most highly honored of our living missionaries. She was a Christian from babyhood. When she was a little child, Jesus was to her a living, present personality; He was as real and as near as her father and mother. When she was but three years old she one day said to her father, "Papa, Jesus blesses me and makes me so happy, I feel like jumping up and down." In this blessed, refining, ennobling and purifying companionship her childhood and youth were passed. When she entered college this constant, confidential companionship with Jesus Christ was preserved; ripen-

ing understanding and broader knowledge only widened and intensified her constant, conscious communion with Christ; and when, on the second of April, 1907, she lay down upon what was to be her death-bed, she was a young woman who had personally, practically no knowledge of evil; for all her life had been spent in sweet obedience to all that her enlightened conscience said was the law of right. That such a life is possible for a child of Adam is a most important truth, and good cause of profound gratitude and most comforting hope.

In the year 1896, Miss Buck left India to attend the Ohio Wesleyan University, and in the year 1904 she returned to India as a missionary of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Moradabad was her first appointment, and the story of the service will be told by her fellow missionaries there. During the year 1906 she was on sick leave in Garhwal; and before returning to the plains she had come into such close touch with the people, and was so deeply interested in the work of the mission that her appointment to Garhwal in 1907, to take up Mrs. Messmore's work, natur-

ally followed. She reached Pauri in the middle of March; two happy weeks were spent in preparing for and beginning work; two more weeks were spent on her sick bed, and there, in the early hours of April 17th, the end came. Her vivacious, enthusiastic, transparent, affectionate temperament made her a delightful companion for every one; her artistic feeling, her cultivated literary taste, and her alert intelligence made her a pleasant and profitable companion for folk with bookish proclivities. To meet and talk with her for an hour was to me an intellectual stimulant. Little children, Hindu undergraduates, Christian Bible readers, learned pundits all enjoyed meeting her, for she could come near to each and had something for all. In a comparatively retired solitude like Pauri the advent of such a personality was a blessing to us all, and it is not strange that her departure has left us in the shadow of a great sorrow.

The Methodist Mission has for nearly 40 years maintained a good Anglo-Vernacular school at Pauri, the head-quarters of the Garhwal District, and nearly all the educated men and government officials of the district have been at some time pupils of the

school. But not one of the Brahmans or Rajputs has become a Christian. All the Garhwal Christians are from the lower classes. When Miss Buck was here last year she had for her pundit a young man from the Pauri School who had passed the University Entrance Examination in 1905. He taught her Hindi, and she taught him Christ; and when she returned to Garhwal this year I felt that her coming was providential; that it meant the conversion of this pundit, and that the ice once broken, others would venture to make the same choice. A few lines published in the INDIAN WITNESS of September 20th, 1906, headed "A Hindu Pundit" show her interest in the case and her clear apprehension of the man's spiritual disadvantages and disabilities. She afterwards developed the short poem into a booklet of more than 600 verses which shows not only rare poetic feeling and good literary ability, but also indicates that she had made a careful study of essential Hinduism, and that a sense of its blighting influence weighed very heavily upon her spirit. She was delirious during much of the time in her illness; and the needs and woes and spiritual darkness of the world and particularly of Garhwal tortured her so that she cried and moaned

and lamented in agony of soul, for she seemed to feel that she was responsible for the souls of all these poor people. Could this intense, burning desire for the salvation of Garhwal have expended itself in years of personal service among the people, instead of in the horror of delirium, the outlook would have been so much brighter! But though the workman falls God carries on His work. We cannot fathom God's plans, but we can and do believe in His wisdom and in His purposes of mercy towards man and in spite of appearances we repeat with absolute confidence, "He doeth all things well." Yet even this assurance does not altogether satisfy us. We have no quarrel with God, but with Tennyson we cry:

"For this alone on Death I wreak
The wrath that garners in my heart;
He put our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak."

To what Mr. Messmore has writen above we desire to add the following, which was found among Miss Buck's papers after her death. It is her field of labor which she addresses as "you," to which she went only a month before she died. The lines show the deep spirituality and earnestness of the writer.

In Preparation

By Lois Mathild Buck

If my lips are stained,
Then the prayers they pray for you will be
unclean.
So I kneel and plead :
Oh ! Hand of God, take Thou a burning coal
From off the altar on the holy mount,
And lay it on my lips until their whole
Impurity goes up in clouds of smoke.

If my arm is weak,
Then 'twill fail to raise and lift you from the
ground.
So I pray and plead :
Oh! Arm of God, reach down and take ~~Thou~~ a hold
Of my weak arm, give it the living thrill
Of Thy great strength, as prophets felt when bold
They stretched their's forth to lift the nations up.

If my life is dead,
Then before your face I'll be a stricken corpse.
With a cry I plead :
Oh ! Life of God, breathe and make
Me live, that I within their midst may have
A full, rich being; so that they may take
Cognizance, say—" Behold a life she lives."

Enroute to Pauri, March, 1907.